

MMA Testimony in Opposition to HB 4501

House Education Reform Committee

1/11/2018

Mr. Chairman and the members of the House Education Reform Committee,

We appreciate the opportunity to share our concerns and opposition to HB 4501, that would eliminate the WorkKeys® National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) endorsement on Michigan high school diplomas.

The Michigan Manufacturers Association represents manufacturers in the largest sector of the Michigan economy. With an aging workforce and changes in technology, finding talent has become one of the primary barriers to competitiveness for a large industrial state like Michigan.

As one of the primary customers of the K-12 system, we are strong proponents of high quality K-12 education in Michigan. We believe the education system ought to be responsive to the needs of students in their quest to become productive and employable citizens, and the needs of employers in seeking qualified talent to hire and help companies compete effectively in the global economy.

The WorkKeys® NCRC system provides a way for the K-12 system and the students themselves to communicate to the employers that the students possess the skill sets needed by the employer. While great effort has been put forth to increase the quality of a high school diploma in Michigan, the Work Keys NCRC system communicates directly to employers in a way that helps students match their skill sets with the talent needs of employers. This system helps students get hired, and helps employers find the right students with the right skill sets.

The WorkKeys® NCRC system focuses on core competencies relevant to employers' needs, including applied mathematics, locating information, and reading for information. The system then sets score levels, including: Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum. These levels signify competency levels and communicate employability.

Site Selection Magazine, in their 2016 survey of corporate real estate executives, sites "workforce skills" as the top issue in their list of the most important location criteria. In fact, two of the top ten issues relate to workforce, with "workforce development" coming in at number six in the top 10.

Currently, 252 companies support the NCRC program. With the increasing demand for skilled workers, we would suggest, enhancing the program rather than eliminating it. For example, the state could increase efforts to increase employer awareness and usefulness of this valuable tool, or add the NCRC level attained to the Talent-Connect database, or encourage schools to share pictures with their community of platinum-level students just as they do National Merit Finalists.

In conclusion, we support not just retaining this program, but also enhancing it to ensure the education system is responsive to needs of both students and to the needs of employers. The talent gap is one of the primary barriers to competitiveness in Michigan. We must do all we can to address this challenge, and eliminating an effective tool for matching students with the right career opportunities is not the right direction for Michigan.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views on HB 4501.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Delaney', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Delaney McKinley
Senior Director of Government Affairs and Membership